

It is true that it is not the duty of the State to have any class of its citizens as pampered favorites, but it is its duty to see that those ideas prevail which shall bring the best results to the body politic. That is done wherever enlightened views obtain about economic questions which concern the condition of those who toil. It is well known that servile labor is not the best labor, and that kind which approaches it has never brought the best results to the State. Those nations of antiquity were not the most prosperous or the most powerful when the lines between those represented by the patricians and plebeians were the most strongly drawn, and little attention given to the great body of the people. The same lesson may be learned from mediæval and modern history, and if we take up the history of the English speaking people we shall see that every step they have taken away from vassalage—every movement among them which has given stimulation and encouragement to those who toil has brought the best results to all. The history of the past may reasonably be relied on as an index for the future. The purpose, therefore, that called into being Labor Bureaus is a high one—that purpose being to look into the condition of the producers—particularly of those who are employees—to get their ideas and present them along with the ideas of others—to get ideas and to give back ideas, that may act and re-act, that the public mind may be informed and a just sentiment created and fostered.

The first Labor Bureau was established in Massachusetts in 1869—a State in which more attention, perhaps, is paid to economic science than any in the Union. The Massachusetts Bureau made such a record for good in that Commonwealth, that no department of State was more relied on or created a greater interest than the Bureau of Labor Statistics. It came to be liberally supported, and it soon attracted attention in other States by its work. In 1872, Pennsylvania established a similar Bureau, and in 1876 Missouri also established one; other States followed, until now there are twenty-two State Bureaus in existence, and also a National Bureau, which has recently been enlarged and made a separate department of the government. These Bureaus owe their rise and growth to no sudden impulse or ebullition of feeling, but the good effect of their work being seen and observed, they have steadily widened their influence and made their way to public favor. It is safer to assume that the development of this kind of statistical work has just begun. The statistical department of government does not to-day, highly as it is regarded, occupy that prominent position which it is destined to assume. There is an eagerness everywhere apparent for statistical information, especially on economic questions, not for theoretical, but for practical purposes. The time has come when it is recognized that it is best for States to “keep books,” as well as prudent business men, in order to post themselves thoroughly about their internal affairs, to see what their condition is and what their possibilities are—hence the avidity for statistical information.